

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4692
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION USNATO
USDOCOSOUTH
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1552

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PEPR, CY, EG
SUBJECT: GREEK REACTION TO EGYPTIAN-CYPRIOT DISPUTE

REF: NICOSIA 486

1. THE UNFORTUNATE EVENTS IN CYPRUS OVER THE WEEKEND AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED CLOSELY IN GREECE. CYPRIOT PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU WAS IN TOUCH WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS ABOUT THESE EVENTS AND CARAMANLIS HAS SOUGHT TO ATTENUATE THE STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN CYPRUS AND EGYPT. MEDIA COVERAGE HAS BEEN INTENSE AND GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE OF
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THE GOVERNMENT OF CYPRUS AND CONDEMNATORY OF PRESIDENT SADAT.

2. YESTERDAY (FEBRUARY 21) PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS SENT A PERSONAL PRIVATE MESSAGE THROUGH THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR IN ATHENS TO PRESIDENT SADAT IN AN EFFORT TO ATTENUATE THE TENSION IN CYPRIOT-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS WHICH HAS RESULTED FROM THE LARNACA SHOOTOUT. ACCORDING

TO A SOURCE AT THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY, CARAMANLIS
ESSENTIALLY OFFERED HIS GOOD OFFICES TO ASSIST IN MODERAT-
ING THE CRISIS BETWEEN CAIRO AND NICOSIA.

3. PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION LEADER PAPANDREOU SENT KYPRIANOU
A MESSAGE CONGRATULATING HIM FOR THE WAY IN WHICH HE
HANDLED THE SITUATION. PUBLIC OPINION SEEMS GENERALLY
TO SUPPORT THE CYPRIOT PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE
ALSO SOME DETRACTORS WHO ARE SAYING PRIVATELY THAT
KYPRIANOU'S PERSONAL ACTIONS IN THE AFFAIR DAMAGED
HIS OWN PRESTIGE AND IMAGE OF STATESMANSHIP AND LET TO THE
DETERIORATION IN CYPRIOT-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS. THEY ALSO NOTE THAT
THE TWO TERRORISTS NOW INCARCERATED IN CYPRUS MAKE THE
GOC A TARGET FOR REPRISALS.

4. THE GREEK MEDIA HAVE ATTRIBUTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR
THE SHOOTOUT TO THE EGYPTIANS AND CRITICIZED THE GOC FOR
HAVING "INVADED" CYPRIOT SOIL. THE COMMUNIST PRESS
CARRIED THIS LINE EVEN FURTHER AND INCLUDED THE US,
ISRAEL, NATO, AND OTHER IMPERIALIST POWERS AS BEING
BEHIND THE INCIDENT IN ORDER, IT WAS CLAIMED, TO ISOLATE
CYPRUS FROM HER FRIENDS AND TO PROMOTE IMPERIALIST INTERESTS
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN. SOME LEFTIST OPPOSITION
NEWSPAPERS ALSO WERE CRITICAL OF THE GOC FOR NOT DOING
MORE TO SUPPORT THE CYPRIOT GOVERNMENT. THE CONSERVA-
TIVE PRESS GENERALLY CONDEMNED COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES IN
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CYPRUS AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE UNFORTUNATE TURN OF EVENTS.
THIS SEGMENT OF THE PRESS ALSO SINGLED OUT CYPRIOT SOCIALIST
PARTY (EDEK) LEADER LYSSARIDES FOR CRITICISM, ATTACKING HIM
FOR HIS CLOSE TIES WITH THE EXTREMISTS.

5. COMMENT: IN A DISCUSSION WITH AN EMBOFF, THE WORK-
ING LEVEL MFA OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR CYPRUS STATED THAT THE
GOC WAS DISMAYED OVER THESE EVENTS AND CON-
CERNED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN CYPRUS AND EGYPT, WHICH
HAD BEEN CONSIDERED HERE AS ONE OF THE STRONGER SUPPORT-
ERS OF THE CYPRIOT CAUSE, HAD DETERIORATED SO ABRUPTLY
THROUGH WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A BAD MISUNDERSTAND-
ING. ALTHOUGH IT HAS NOT MADE ANY OFFICIAL COMMENT
OR RELEASED THE TEXT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT
SADAT, THE GOC IS NOW SEEKING TO LIMIT THE DAMAGE AND TO GET
CYPRIOT-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS BACK ON AN EVEN KEEL AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE.

MILLS

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